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THE STAGE GUILD PLAYS



The HERO OF SANTA MARIA

By KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN and BEN HECHT



NEW YORK  FRANK SHAY  PUBLISHER

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FRANK SHAY - - NEW YORK

THE STAGE GUILD PLAYS NO. 1

The HERO of SANTA MARIA

A RIDICULOUS TRAGEDY
IN ONE ACT BY
KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN
AND BEN HECHT



FRANK SHAY . . . NEW YORK

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Characters

NATHAN FISHER.....(Known as "Nate")
 MARTIN FISHER.....(Known as "Marty")
 ELMIRA FISHER
 EDWARD MARTIN FISHER.....
(Known as "Toady")
 JAMES MERRYWEATHER HINES.....
(Known as the "Squire," or "Heinie")
 BERNARD P. FOSS
 THEODORE Q. WILKINSON

THE HERO OF SANTA MARIA was originally presented by the Washington Square Players, at the Comedy Theatre, New York, on the night of February 12th, 1917.

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THE HERO OF SANTA MARIA

The Scene is the living room of the Fisher home. : A scrupulously neat room of the late horse-hair and wax flower period.

At the back is the "front door" and near it a window looking towards the street. At the left is a door leading into Marty's bed-room, and at the right a door leading into a room sacred to Nate.

Over Marty's door is a printed sign "Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law." On the right wall is a crayon portrait of Nate in G. A. R. uniform. The uniform is draped with small American flags.

In the center of the room is a table with two stiff chairs beside it. There are also articles of furniture, including another small table with a drawer in it. Among the knickknacks on the center table is a plush covered family album.

The time is about ten in the morning of a pleasant spring day.

When the curtain rises the stage is empty. Immediately the street doors open and Marty peers cautiously into the room. He then enters and closes the door behind him.

MARTY. Hey! Anybody home? (*He listens, then goes cautiously to the door at the right, opens it, and listens again.*)

Hullo, Nate, are y' in there? (*Evidently satisfied that the room is empty, he tiptoes across to the door at the left, stands before it and raps softly and with precision. He then squats down and addresses the occupant of the room through the keyhole.*)

Psst! Toady! (*Receiving no response, he looks about anxiously and again speaks into the keyhole, in a slightly louder voice.*)

Psst! Toady.

A sleepy voice from inside: What d'you want?

MARTY. Open the door. It's me, Uncle Marty.

The Voice: Oh! (A bolt is shot and Toady Fisher stands on the threshold, rubbing his eyes. Marty produces two bottles of beer and a paper bag, which he places on the center table.)

TOADY.—(*Stretching his arms.*) Oh hum!

MARTY. Wake up...I've brought yer breakfast.

TOADY.—(*Glancing at the clock.*) You took yer time about it.

MARTY. If I'd snuck so much as a doughnut out of our own kitchen yer Aunt Elnira'd been wise to us in a minute. She's tighter than the skin on a prize pig, she is.

TOADY. Well, what you got?

MARTY. A couple of bottles of beer and a fried egg sandwich from Hopper's Hotel.

TOADY.—(*Examining the supplies.*)—Huh, is that all?

MARTY.—(*Looking into his hat which he takes off for the first time.*)—I had a pair of fried fish-cakes in the top of my hat. Guess I must lost 'em when I tipped it to Mrs. Sprudder down by the corner.

TOADY.—(*Pulling up a chair to the table.*)—Say get me a glass and a plate, can't you?

MARTY.—(*Seizing his arm.*)—No you don't; not out here. They'll spot you sure.

TOADY. Rats! Pa wouldn't have me arrested.

MARTY. You ain't lived with him for sixty-seven years like I have.

TOADY. He can't pin it on me that I ever seen his fifty dollars.

MARTY. I reckon everybody knows it left town along about the same time you did.

TOADY.—(*Beginning to eat the sandwich.*)—Well, I ain't got it now, that's a cinch.

MARTY. Look here, who's running this family reconciliation, me or you?

TOADY.—(*His mouth full.*)—Aw, can the prodigal son stuff, can it.

MARTY. Now, Toady, don't go and spoil it all.

TOADY. I wouldn't have stopped off in no flea-bitten burg like this only I was sick of bumming my way on freights. All I want's enough coin to get me to Chicago like a gentleman.

MARTY. You don't know how much I've missed you. Why, I can't even take a couple of drinks no more without crying. Go on in there like a good boy and mebbe I'll run up to the barber shop and borrow the police gazette for you to read.

TOADY.—(*Getting up.*)—I give you fair warning, I ain't going to sit in that hole all day.

MARTY. You'll be safe. Even Elmira daresn't put her foot in my room.

TOADY.—(*Picking up one of the beer bottles and the sandwich and moving toward the door at the left.*)—Aw, all right! All right!

MARTY. I'll steal something nice for your dinner, honest to gawd I will. Some cold banana pudding.

TOADY.—(*wearily*)—All right! All right!

(*Marty pushes Toady through the door and closes it.*)

MARTY. Now lock it on the inside. An don't you open your head except I give you the high sign.

TOADY.—(*from inside*)—All right! (*The bolt is shot. Marty listens a moment then goes back to the center table and picks up the remaining bottle of beer just as the street door opens and Elmira Fisher enters. She has a letter in her hand.*)

ELMIRA.—(*in a rasping voice*)—Well, what are you doing home at this time of day?

(*Marty startled, turns and switches the bottle of beer behind him.*)

MARTY. Eh?

ELMIRA. You heard what I said.

MARTY. So help me, I—

ELMIRA. You've been drinking. I can smell it on you from here.

MARTY. That's a nice way for a sister to talk, ain't it?

ELMIRA. I'd like to forget I was your sister.

MARTY. I ain't laying nothing in the way to hinder you trying. (*He makes a move toward the street door.*)

ELMIRA. Where you going now?

MARTY. Mebbe I'm going back to sweep the court house and then again mebbe I'm going fishing.

ELMIRA. Fishing! Huh!

MARTY. Well, fishing's respectable, aint it? It's mentioned in the Bible, ain't it? I guess that'll hold you. The Lord said to his disciples go out and dig bait, or something—

ELMIRA. Martin Henry Fisher, you're a blaspheming good-for-nothing—

MARTY. Aw, dry up!

ELMIRA. You'll lose your job, and serve you right, too.

MARTY. Needn't let that wear on your nose. I'm a political appointee, I am. I've got influence in Forkville.

ELMIRA.—(*turning on him*)—Influence! You've got influence all right. Bad influence, that's what you've got. It was your influence made a thief out of your own nephew Edward and damned his immortal soul for him.

MARTY. I ain't responsible for Toady. He ain't my son.

ELMIRA. It don't matter whose son he is—

MARTY. Aw, lay off!

ELMIRA. What's that you're hiding under your coat tails?

MARTY.—(*realizing that further concealment of the beer bottle is useless*)—Just a plain bottle of beer registered under the Pure Food Act to contain five per cent. alcohol.

ELMIRA. I knew it! So that's what you keep hidden in that pig-sty of a room of yours. (*She advances toward the door at the left.*)

MARTY.—(*in alarm*)—Hold on there. Where you going.

ELMIRA. To bust in that door if I have to take an axe to it. I'm going to clear this house of every drop of devil's rum you've had the indecency to bring into it.

MARTY.—(*getting between Elmira and the door*)—No you don't! I own one-third of this house the same as you and Nate. Take a squint at that sign over my door. "Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law." You keep out of my place and I'll keep out of yours. Don't have nothing more to do with me than you can help and I'll return the favor, all right. But, by cricky, if you so much as set one of your flat feet acrost that sill, I'll have a warrant out for you. (*Marty has backed up against the door and Elmira stands glaring at him. Nathan Fisher enters from the street unnoticed in time to hear the last line.*)

ELMIRA.—(*to Marty*)—You—you viper.

NATE.—(*gruffly*)—Here, what's going on?

MARTY. Howdy, Nate. I was just going out.

ELMIRA. It would be a God's mercy if you'd go for good.

NATE.—(*coming toward the table*)—It ain't likely he'll oblige us that far. What can't be helped has got to be endured.

MARTY. Amen, that goes for both sides of the family.

NATE.—(*picking up the letter from the table and peering at it*)—When did this come?

ELMIRA. I just fetched it from the postoffice.

NATE.—(*feeling in his pockets*)—I must have left my specks in my other coat. Here, Marty, where's it from? (*He hands the letter to Marty and sits down.*)

MARTY.—(*reading from the corner of the envelope*)—Fourteen eighteen F Street, Washington, D. C.

Nate. Huh!

ELMIRA. Give it here to me.

MARTY. Don't get in a twitter. I'm doing this.

NATE. Well, why don't you open it? (*Marty deliberately tears open the envelope and shakes out the letter.*)

MARTY.—(*reading from the letter.*)

Mr. Nathan Fisher, Forkville, Indiana.

Dear Sir: Our Mr. Gray has again looked into the evidence upon which you propose to base your fourth application for pension as a veteran of the Civil War, and we regret that in our opinion, it is not sufficient to warrant us in going further with the case. The records clearly show that you were drafted into the army March 14th, 1864, and had not left training camp at the close of hostilities.

There is, however, one possibility, to which we call your attention. We understand that the Honorable Bernard P. Foss is a fellow citizen of yours. Mr. Foss is doubtless well known to you, and if willing to bring his personal influence to bear in your behalf could undoubtedly induce the Board of Pensions to take favorable action.

We herewith enclose bill for services to date, trusting that they have been entirely satisfactory and that our suggestion in regard to Mr. Foss will prove helpful.

Yours respectfully,

DODSON & GRIFFIN,
Attorneys at Law.

NATE.—(*with bitter resignation*)—That settles it, consarn 'em! Old Foss wouldn't lift a finger if I was drowning.

ELMIRA. How much is the bill?

MARTY. Eighty-seven dollars.

ELMIRA. The robbers!

NATE.—(*between his teeth*)—That's it, robbers! The hull country's in the hands of a bunch of dirty political crooks. If fellers like Squire Hines and Ted Wilkinson had an ounce of red blooded patriotism, they wouldn't stand to see a soldier of the Rebellion turned out of his nation's history.

MARTY. Haw haw!

ELMIRA. You act like you seen something funny in paying out eighty-seven dollars for nothing.

MARTY. I reckon it takes a smarter liar than Nate to fool 'em in Washington.

NATE. Who's a liar? Ain't I marched in every Decoration Day parade for forty years? Ain't I a member of the G. A. R. Post, Number Ninety-two?

ELMIRA. Not to count being a deacon and an officer of the Sunday School.

MARTY. Being a Bo's'un in the Baptist Church don't entitle you to nothing this side of the Golden Gate.

ELMIRA. You're a low-down blaspheming likker snake.

MARTY. Well, as Toady used to say, mebbe it's better to be soaked in rum than vinegar. (*Elmira begins to whimper.*)

NATE. I told you never to mention that scallywag's name in his house. Ain't it enough misfortune to be cheated out of sixteen hundred dollars back pension and a regular pension twice a month without you forever reminding me that I'm a father of a thief?

MARTY.—(*glancing apprehensively at the bed-room door*)—You hadn't ought to be so hard and unforgiving. Like as not Toady'll turn out a credit to the family yet.

NATE.—(*bitterly*)—I never had an ounce of comfort out of him all the days of his life and I never expect to.

MARTY. Supposing he was to come home—I'm only saying supposing.

NATE.—(*bringing his fist down*)—I'd have him in jail, that's where I'd have him. He's a liar and a drunkard and a thief. There ain't anything bad enough to call him, nothing!

MARTY. Hold on! You don't have to yell.

ELMIRA. There's Squire Hines now.

NATE. Eh! Who?

ELMIRA. Squire Hines. He's coming up the walk!

NATE.—(*confused between his anger at Toady and his*

anger over the pension)—He's another one of 'em, damn 'em! They're all of a piece, conspiring to keep a man out of his rights. Darn the hull pack of 'em.

ELMIRA. Nate!

NATE. He'd better keep out of here. I got scores to settle with him.

MARTY. You ain't thinking of the editorial he wrote the time Toady was up for throwing the dead calf down Eben Fosdick's well? The one where he said the father was responsible for the sins of his son?

NATE. I ain't saying what I'm thinking—

MARTY. 'Cause you'd oughtn't to blame a newspaper editor for thinking things out in an uncommon way. (*There is a knock at the door. Elmira hesitates and looks at Nate. The knock is repeated.*)

NATE.—(*to Elmira*)—You heard him knock, didn't you. (*Elmira opens the street door, Squire Hines enters pompously with his hat in his hand. The others regard him suspiciously without speaking.*)

NATE. Well.

HINES. Mr. Fisher, sir, I realize that under ordinary circumstances I would not be a welcome visitor in your home.

MARTY. I guess you're about right on that.

HINES. I feel, however, that in view of what has so recently and unexpectedly transpired, all petty rancors and animosities should be swept aside. I come, friends, as the bearer of sad, but glorious news, which tonight will thrill the national conscience and set the hearts of every man and woman in the State beating high with pride and sorrow.

ELMIRA. Well, we're listening to you.

HINES. To be as brief as possible; my paper has just received a dispatch from the Associated Press, dated this morning.

MARTY. No wonder you're excited. I bet it's about the first time the Bugle's had a piece of news less than a couple of days old.

HINES.—(*impressively*)—Your levity, sir, is ill timed. The dispatch to which I refer recounts the heroic death of your brother's only son, Edward Martin Fisher.

MARTY. Eh?

NATE.—(*taken back*)—How's that?

ELMIRA. It's all a mistake. Toady wasn't the kind to expose himself.

HINES. So I thought myself, Miss Fisher, but I was wrong. Toady, as you so lovingly call him, showed himself, when the crisis came, to be a man of honor fit to take his place beside the heroes of the past.

MARTY.—(*with a glance at the bed-room*)—Say, you could knock me down with a feather!

NATE. Where did it happen?

HINES. At Santa Maria del something-or-other, on the Mexican border, the Company of United States Cavalry in which your son had enlisted—

ELMIRA. Now I know it's a mistake. Toady never rode a horse his life.

HINES.—(*ignoring the interruption*)—I repeat, sir, his company crossed the river under a murderous fire to dislodge a party of snipers. At the very foot of the enemy's position, Edward gloriously gave up his life for our beloved flag, the first American killed.

MARTY.—(*wiping his face with his handkerchief*)—Phew!

NATE. You're sure of what you're saying?

HINES. When you have been duly informed of your bereavement by the War Department, the remains will be shipped here for interment, via El Paso, Texas.

MARTY. I never was a funeral fan like Elmira, but this here corpse is one I'll take a heap of interest looking at.

ELMIRA.—(*to Marty*)—You're a callous, unfeeling reptile.

HINES. I have no wish to add to your burden of affliction, but I warn you in advance that the features have been mutilated beyond recognition. He was indentified only by the card sewed in his uniform.

MARTY.—(*slapping his knee as a light suddenly dawns on him*)—Haw, haw, haw! So that's it?

ELMIRA.—(*seizing Marty by the collar*)—So that's what?

MARTY. Take your hands off me. I got a right to be upset by my grief the same as the rest of you, ain't I?

HINES. If I may be allowed to say so, your grief ought to be somewhat tempered by the knowledge that your loss has given the youth of America an example of noble and self sacrificing courage.

NATE. I knew it.

MARTY. Eh?

NATE. Any son of mine was bound to have the right stuff in him. Yes, sir, I knew it all along.

MARTY. Well, I'll be damned!

NATE. And it's about time the nation waked up to what me and mine has done for it.

HINES. That's just the point I was coming to. We have decided, with your permission, Mr. Fisher, to hold a large public demonstration of Pride and Sorrow, a Military funeral, the expenses of which, I am authorized to say, will be borne jointly by the Bugle, Congressman-elect Foss and the Honorable Theodore Q. Wilkinson, our Democratic candidate for Sheriff at the coming county elections.

MARTY. Seems to me the offer ain't to be sneezed at.

HINES. To be perfectly frank, that's the way I look at it.

NATE. No!

ELMIRA. You mean you ain't going to let them?

NATE. They can't pay me off cheap and make a good thing out of it for themselves at the same time.

HINES. Am I to understand—

NATE. You're to understand you can't make nothing off me. I've suffered enough for my country and been disowned by it. I ain't going to sit by and see my own son's funeral turned into a rally for the Democratic party that wouldn't lift a finger to get me my just rights. No, sir! He'll be buried with only family members and close personal friends attending, and if there's any credit coming, it ain't going to be the bunch of political shysters that has turned me down.

HINES. I give you my word, Mr. Fisher—

MARTY. Nate's right for once. If he lets you pull votes for Ted Wilkinson and boom the circulation of the Bugle, there ought to be something in it besides brass bands and immortelles.

NATE. I've given my own flesh and blood that might have been a comfort and a support to me in my old age.

ELMIRA. It's no more'n right, they should do something for him.

HINES. I'm deeply pained by your attitude, deeply disappointed.

MARTY. It don't seem exactly fair we should deprive the Squire of a chance to make a couple of speeches.

HINES. The committee are at the Bugle office now, drafting a set of resolutions which we had intended to present la-

ter in the day I feel, however, that under the circumstances, any further offer from us might be misunderstood.

MARTY. You needn't be shy about making a proposition. This ain't a sensitive family.

HINES.—(to Nate)—In that case, may I venture to suggest that if Mr. Foss would undertake to push your own claim for a pension and that if the Bugle would draft and circulate a petition endorsing it?—

ELMIRA. Do you mean that?

MARTY. There's sixteen hundred dollars of back pension due him, according to his own reckoning.

HINES. I dare say the Government will not be niggardly in its recognition of your brother's patriotic service when the facts are presented by the proper persons.

NATE.—I ain't saying it's a bargain.

ELMIRA. If there was some way of fixing it so as Nate's pension was mentioned in the resolutions, and Mr. Foss couldn't crawl out of it afterwards.

MARTY. I always said that woman had ought to been a lawyer.

HINES. Well?

NATE. Mebbe if you could fix it like Elmira says.

HINES.—(glancing at his watch)—Done! A public funeral it is then. (*He has lost his unctiousness and the others have apparently lost sight of the gravity of the event upon which they are basing their bargain.*) I'll be back in fifteen minutes with the committee.

NATE. I ain't promising nothing yet.

HINES.—(genially)—That, sir, to put it vulgarly, is up to us. Good morning all. (*He goes briskly out at the street door. Elmira goes to the window and looks after him.*)

ELMIRA.—(thoughtfully)—Eighty-seven dollars from sixteen hundred—

MARTY. I never thought twenty minutes ago I'd be the uncle of a hero and the brother of a bonyfidy pensioned veteran. (*He fills his pipe.*)

ELMIRA. Well, it won't benefit you none. You'll pay your keep out of what you can earn for yourself same as ever.

MARTY. Mebbe so and then again, mebbe not. (*He strikes a match.*)

ELMIRA. Don't you dast light that pipe in here!

MARTY. Aw, close your face!

NATE. It's hard enough to lose an only son without hearing you two jawing each other.

MARTY. Yes, and mebbe it's a darnsight harder'n you think to lose a son like yours.

ELMIRA. What d'you mean by that?

MARTY. There's a little piece of business has got to be settled amongst ourselves before the Squire gets back with them resolutions.

NATE.—(*suspiciously*)—Eh!

MARTY.—(*going to the bed-room door and opening it*)—Hey! Come out of there. (*Toady appears in the doorway—Nate and Elmira regard him in speechless consternation,*)

TOADY. Howdy, pa.

NATE.—(*bitterly*)—So! You wasn't killed after all?

MARTY. At least his face ain't any worse mutilated than usual. Come on, Toady, don't be bashful. You ain't buried yet.

ELMIRA. I might have known there was some mistake.

NATE. Mistake nothing! It's a game they put up on me, the two of 'em. Yes, and Hines was in it, and Foss, and the hull damn bunch like as not.

TOADY. No they wasn't.

MARTY. This here is just a quiet family funeral. (*He begins turning the pages of the family album on the table.*)

NATE. I'll—I'll get even with you. I'll—

TOADY. There's gratitude for you.

ELMIRA. I like your impudence.

TOADY. It ain't every son has done as much for his old man as I've done for you, pa.

NATE. I'll call the constable and have you in jail. Yes, sir, and I'll have Marty—

MARTY. You needn't pay no further attention to me. (*He extracts a photograph from the album and goes to the small table where he opens a drawer and takes out a hammer and some tacks.*)

NATE.—(*to Toady*)—You heard what I said. Now git!

TOADY. I ain't in no particular rush. You can't pin nothing on me. I'll tell 'em Aunt Elmira swiped your fifty dollars for the Baptist mission. (*Marty draws a chair to the*

side of the room, climbs on it and begins tacking up the photograph in a conspicuous place.)

ELMIRA.—You're a deserter from the United States Army. They'll get you for that anyhow.

TOADY. Say, you make me laugh. When I heard old Hiny shooting off that bunk about me wading acrost the Rio Grandy with a flag in my mit, you could have butchered me with a dish rag.

MARTY.—(*pointing with his hammer to the flags over Nate's crayon portrait.*)—Will you reach me them flags, Elmira, please?

ELMIRA.—(*turning*)—Eh? Land of Goshen, what are you doing on my best chair.

MARTY. Just putting up an old photo of the dear departed for his loving relatives to admire. (*He gets down from the chair and goes for the flags himself.*)

TOADY. That's right. You'd ought to have a decorated picture of the Hero of Santa Maria. I guess you can't jump over Uncle Marty for a sob artist.

ELMIRA.—(*advancing on Toady*)—I'm going to get to the inside of this if I have to shake the skin off you.

TOADY. Hold on, will you, I'm busy. (*He turns to Marty who has returned with the flags and begun adjusting them.*) Say, Unk, you're sticking them flags a little crooked.

NATE. If Hines and Foss ain't putting up a game on me, how'll I look when they find out?

TOADY. I guess that's something you got to figure out for yourself.

NATE. You've fixed my chances for a pension. It's a conspiracy!

ELMIRA. Yes, and Marty was in it.

MARTY. So help me, I never laid eyes on Toady till he came tapping at my window last night.

ELMIRA. You needn't tell me.

TOADY. If you all shut up, I'll give you the straight dope. On the level, I will.

MARTY. Make it short if you don't want your pa to have apoplexy.

TOADY. I met a feller in the park one night last winter.

ELMIRA. What park?

TOADY. Madison Square Park, New York City. He was a little red headed feller with bow legs, and say but he had

a bad eye, believe me! His name was Christian Dane O'Houlihan.

ELMIRA. What's that got to do with it?

TOADY. For cat's sake, who's telling this, me or you?

NATE. Let him alone.

TOADY. "Gee," I sez to him, "if I had a flossy label like yours, I bet I wouldn't have to be no free lunch hound." "If you like it," he sez, "you're welcome to it. You can't do no worse with it than what I've done. If I had a nice plain name like Edward Martin Fisher, I'd go and enlist in the cavalry with it." "Go ahead," I sez, "you're on." So we swapped names and I got a job washing dishes in a dairy lunch.

MARTY. And the red-headed feller's getting shipped from Santa Maria via El Paso, Texas, to be buried at the expense of the local option Democrats of Forkville, Indiana.

TOADY. I guess that's about the answer. My name was more unluckier than his'n.

ELMIRA. What did you come back for? Why couldn't you let the only sensible thing you ever done stay done.

TOADY. Oh, I got a heart all right. I almost had a mind to light out and keep my mouth shut when I saw how puffed up Pa was over having me killed. I'd have done it, too, only I heard you driving that bargain with Hines about my funeral.

ELMIRA. Well, what do you want? I know you want something.

TOADY. I give you just one guess.

NATE. No, sir, I don't give him a cent. I'll be doing my country another service by putting a crook like him behind the bars.

TOADY.—(*cheerfully*)—All right. Turn me up and blooie goes the pension.

MARTY. You sort of owe it to the family reputation, Nate, to keep him dead.

ELMIRA. If your pa gives you twenty-five dollars will you get out and leave us be?

TOADY. Come around to the other ear. You don't talk loud enough.

NATE. I tell you I won't be a party to no fraud.

ELMIRA. That ain't the question. When he's gone we can decide what's best according to our own conscience.

MARTY. I'd like to put some money on the way 'Miry's conscience'll jump.

ELMIRA.—(to Toady, paying no attention to Marty)—Suppose he makes it fifty dollars.

TOADY. What d'you take me for, a boob? I guess I know what me and the red-headed feller has done for pa all right. Twenty-five per cent. cash. Them's my best terms. (*He turns and surveys the decorated portrait.*) Say, Uncle Marty, that looks swell.

ELMIRA. I never heard such gall in my life.

TOADY. I want four hundred dollars, or I'll walk down the street to Hopper's Hotel, and get drunk where the hull town'll see me.

NATE. That's a fine way for a son to talk to his father. Here's Hines and Foss come around to do the right thing after ten years' crookedness and just when it's all fixed up for me to get my just deserts—

MARTY. Hold on!

ELMIRA. Yes and mebbe your pa'd have got his pension long ago except for your carryings on, putting everybody against us.

TOADY. Don't make me laugh. Everybody's heard how pa tried to buy a substitute when he was drafted only he couldn't raise the coin.

NATE. That's a lie, you blackmailing young skunk!

TOADY. I got my feelings the same as other people and just for that word skunk it'll cost you an extra hundred before I leave this house.

MARTY. They'll be back here any minute with them resolutions.

NATE.—(rising)—I'll—I'll—

MARTY. You'll get your regular thirty a month all the same.

NATE.—(to Toady)—I'll—I'll—take a stick to you. I'll beat you till there ain't a hull bone in your carcass. (*He seizes his stick.*)

TOADY. All right, sail in. I could lick you with one hand, but I'll let you beat me if you want to. (*Nate makes a move toward Toady.*)

ELMIRA. For the love of heaven, Nate, be careful.

TOADY. Only for every belt you give me, I'll holler like the Bull of Basham. We'll have all the neighbors in here

to see you basting the Hero of Santa Maria. (*Nate stands trembling with rage, the stick clenched in his hand.*)

MARTY. Walloping the corpse back to life'll settle things quick enough. (*A band is heard faintly in the distance. Elmira puts her hand suddenly to her heart.*)

ELMIRA. Glory be! What's that? (*They all listen a moment.*)

MARTY. It's Hinie coming back with his bandwagon load of Pride and Sorrow.

TOADY.—(*cheerfully*)—Well, Pa, what's the good word?

NATE. You—you—

TOADY. I meant to be easy on you, but when they turn the court-house corner, I'll have to make it eight hundred for the suspense you're causing me.

NATE.—(*inarticulate with rage*)—You'll—you'll—(*The music grows suddenly louder.*)

MARTY. There they go around the corner into Main street.

ELMIRA.—(*wringing her hands*)—You better give in, Nate. Three quarters is better'n nothing.

TOADY. It ain't three-quarters any longer. I've been reasonable and honest but you've kin'd of pushed me too far. I've got to have eight hundred cold, iron dollars.

ELMIRA. We ain't got four hundred to our names, let alone eight hundred. (*The band stops and there is only the sound of the drums tapping a slow march.*)

TOADY. I'll take one hundred in cash and Pa's note for eight hundred, six months at seven per cent. interest. Seven hundred to the order of Christian Dane O'Houlihan, that's me, for services rendered, and the rest to Uncle Marty for acting as my agent. How's that, Marty?

MARTY. Sounds fair to me.

TOADY. Marty can hold the notes and if they ain't taken up on the dot, I'll come back and we'll all get juggled together for defrauding the Government.

MARTY.—(*at the window*)—You better decide pretty quick, Nate. They're almost in front of the house.

NATE. No, by God! You can't rob a man that's been honest all his life. I'll—

MARTY. They're stopping in the gate. Foss has got his plug hat on.

NATE. They ain't here any too quick to suit me. I'll have the both of you up for robbery and blackmail.

ELMIRA. You'd better think what you're doing, Nate.

NATE. That's fine advice for a deaconess to give, ain't it?

ELMIRA. I'm only thinking what's best in the end.

NATE. No, sir! I'm honest and I'll see you all damned before I'll—

TOADY.—(*soothingly*)—It's all right, Pa. I know you ain't yourself. I'm going back in Uncle Marty's room and if you want to go through with it, the stuff's on. I mean it, I'll skin out tonight and stay a corpse. (*He picks up the bottle of beer from the table.*) Of course, if you want me to come and get pinched, all you got to do is call me.

NATE.—(*sullenly*)—I ain't saying what I'll do. (*There is another knock. Toady goes into the bed-room and closes the door softly. Elmira goes to the street door and opens it, disclosing Foss, Hines and Wilkinson. Foss wears a frock coat and carries a silk hat in one hand and a roll of papers in the other. The three dignitaries advance into the room. Behind them is a group of neighbors framed in the doorway. Wilkinson shakes Nate by the hand rather abruptly and awkwardly.*)

WILKINSON.—(*attempting to come at once to the point*)—Howdy, Mr. Fisher. The Squire's (*he indicates Hines with a hitch of his thumb*) already put you wise to what we're here for.

HINES.—(*cutting in on Wilkinson and taking Nate's reluctant hand*)—Quite so! (*He points to the decorated portrait.*)—See, gentlemen, what loving hands have already done. Nothing we can say or do more sincerely voices the poignancy of this moment than those simple flags and that simple photograph.

FOSS.—(*taking Nate's hand in turn*)—In this room, sir, where the hero of the Santa Maria so recently lived and had his being—(*Marty glances apprehensively at the bed-room door*)—our sympathy must seem a poor and inadequate thing—

NATE. I ain't said I wanted your sympathy, I—

ELMIRA.—(*cutting in*)—Don't mind what he says, Mr. Foss. He's been that upset—

FOSS.—(*still wringing Nate's hand*)—Spartan firmness, M'am. I admire him for it.

WILKINSON. I'll just leave some of my campaign cards on your table in case the neighbors—(*Hines shoots him an ugly look.*)

FOSS. We will not intrude on you long, Mr. Fisher. I have delegated myself—

WILKINSON. Been delegated.

FOSS. Been delegated by the citizens of Forkville to act as their spokesman on this solemn occasion and to read you these er— (*he adjusts his eyeglasses.*)

WILKINSON. You'll find them O. K., Mr. Fisher.

HINES. We have inserted a clause explicitly recognizing your own patriotic services.

MARTY. D'you hear that, Nate?

NATE. Yes, I hear it. But I got something to say first. (*Elmira plants a chair against the bed-room door and sits down in it.*)

FOSS.—(*unrolling his document.*)—Spare yourself, my friend. We all know the strain you've been laboring under. Perhaps, later at the public demonstration—(*Nate glances at him.*)

HINES. The Governor and Senator Tinblatter have wired us—

WILKINSON. Say, that's a fine stunt. A little talk, eh? Telling the folks how Edward was, always a good Democrat. (*Nate glares at him.*)

HINES. The Governor and Senator Tinblatter have wired us promising to speak. Perhaps after that.

ELMIRA. D'you hear, Nate? The Governor and Senator Tinblatter.

NATE. I ain't said there'd be no demonstration.

MARTY. You'll be getting telegrams from Washington next.

WILKINSON. You bet! Joe Finks is on the piazza now with a fist full. (*A man steps forward from the group in the doorway and hands Nate a packet of yellow envelopes. Nate looks at them helplessly.*)

MARTY. The huli Democratic party's going to see this thing done up right.

FOSS.—(*clearing his throat and reading from the paper*)—We, the citizens of Forkville, Indiana, offer the following: Whereas, this day has become for us a day of er—

MARTY.—(*under his breath*)—Pride and sorrow.

ELMIRA.—(to Marty)—Shut up!

FOSS. Whereas, facing his country's foes on foreign soil, Edward Martin Fisher, son of our respected citizen, Nathan Fisher, himself an intrepid defender of our national existence in the Civil War, yesterday gave up his life;

Whereas, by his courageous death and example, the said Edward Martin Fisher has performed an inestimable service to each and everyone of us—

MARTY. That's right!

FOSS. Be it resolved, that we evidence our esteem and gratitude to the bereaved father by circulating an endorsement of his own claim to the proper and lawful pension heretofore unaccountably denied him by the national government.

And be it further and finally resolved, that Edward Martin Fisher be buried with full military honors and all other tokens of love and respect of which this city and the Sovereign State of Indiana are capable.

(Signed) BERNARD P. FOSS,
Member of Congress,
JAMES MERRYWEATHER HINES,
THEODORE Q. WILKINSON,
Committee on Arrangements.

(Foss rolls up the paper. Elmira, unable to stand the tension, sobs in partial hysteria. Nate's face has undergone various changes during the reading. He is rapidly losing his desire for revenge on Toady under the influence of the adulation of his neighbors. He stands undecided, crumpling the telegrams in his hand.)

WILKINSON. I guess that about covers it. (They all regard Nate as if expecting a definite answer.)

MARTY.—(seeing that Nate has practically given in)—You better say something, Nate.

NATE. I—I don't know exactly how to put it, gentlemen—

MARTY. You was mighty keen to talk a minute ago.

ELMIRA.—(between her sobs, afraid that Marty may spoil everything)—Let him alone, can't you.

NATE...It's all come on me sort of sudden-like, but I guess I know what I done for the United States,—yes, and what my son Edward done for 'em, too.

THE CROWD IN THE DOORWAY. Hear! Hear!

NATE. I'd kind of set my heart on a—a—

MARTY. A quiet, family funeral—

FOSS. Exactly, but under the circumstances—

NATE. It ain't for me to set myself up against what's expected of me.

WILKINSON.—(*extending his hand*)—Put it here, Mr. Fisher.

HINES. Then we're to understand?

NATE. I reckon I got to accept your resolutions.

FOSS.—(*shaking Nate by the hand*)—I can see how, sir, that your son was a chip off the old block.

MARTY. That's about the truest thing anybody's said yet.

CURTAIN.

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